

Forest Plan Revision Place-Based Workshops
July 14-28, 2008
Woodstock, Lexington, Verona and Hot Springs, VA
and Baker, WV

NOTE: There are two maps associated with this summary, one for the North Half of the forest and one for the South Half. These maps are in Adobe Acrobat pdf format. Areas that received either numerous comments or comments that had multiple use conflicts potentially associated with it are highlighted with blue circles on these maps. Each blue circle is also represented as a bookmark so that you can automatically navigate to a specific area by clicking on that bookmark. Bookmarks can be accessed by the icon that looks like a page with a ribbon that appears on the left hand side of the map pdf document when you open it.

Meeting Format and Agenda

Participants were divided into small groups and gathered around tables that were covered with maps of the forest (by ranger district) showing the management areas under the current 1993 Forest Plan. The groups were asked the following questions: **“What areas of the x District would you like to see managed in a different way and how would you like them to be managed? Why?”** Participants were asked to record their ideas directly on the maps, highlighting specific areas of interest. Comment sheets were also provided to capture responses. The maps and comment sheets were later scanned for the record. This document is a summary of the map and comments sheet responses.

General comments

Plan

- The 1993 Forest Plan is adequate
- Keep the same management prescriptions
- Keep the management areas concept
- Need to monitor for oak regeneration when that is the purpose for harvesting
- Should be a balance of quiet areas where nature can take its place and proper timber harvesting for wood value, new growth and wildlife habitat
- More flexibility for management options
- Want to see mapping of old growth

Prescribed Fire

- Prescribed fire is important tool for forest health and vegetation management
- Some prescribed burning is needed but need strict requirements where it is allowed; no burning in moist, cove areas
- No prescribed burns at all, let natural fires burn

- Prescribed burning should carefully consider all research on historic fire regimes, the regimes are longer than originally thought
- Use fire for oak regeneration
- Smaller areas for prescribed burning

Wind

- NO WIND POWER
- Wind power not worth the cost to national forest resources
- Or fully study alternatives and effects; well-founded cost/benefit studies
- Keep basic Forest Service conservation goals and don't let new technology, such as wind power, replace those goals
- Need to identify areas for future wind farms that may be needed for regional power production; allow windmills to create green energy
- Keep an open mind at this point
- Follow the 20-20 Directive (bioenergy) and be prepared to meet this need

Special Biological Areas

- Designate all special biological areas recommended by the West Virginia and Virginia Dept of Natural Heritage as SBAs or Research Natural Areas

Wilderness and Roadless

- Identify all Va Mtn Treasure areas as special areas and/or potential wilderness
- Protection of areas can be done without a wilderness designation as this prohibits bicycling use
- Maintain all roadless areas, whether they are 'inventoried' or not
- Permanent protection for all roadless areas
- Protect inventoried roadless areas according to the 2001 rule
- If we add to roadless inventory, use a strict interpretation of the criteria; a road is a road if it is a road
- No more wilderness or high protection areas
- No wilderness in West Virginia

Gas Leasing

- All special biological areas, special areas, roadless areas, and Indiana bat areas should have a no surface occupancy for oil and gas leasing

General Access

- Extend open periods for access roads – make them available for all, not just hunters
- More roads open year-round
- Open roads after big game season until the end of small game season

4WD/OHV Use

- Develop high clearance areas/trail systems and loops on the existing trail structures
- Encourage OHV users to slow down ≤ 7 mph when passing horses
- Set aside a few hundred acres for managed OHV use that can be maintained by volunteers and a use fee. Managed areas seem to be better maintained and less abused than unmanaged areas

ATV Use

- ATV and 4WD use becoming more popular and trails are becoming congested
- Add more ATV and motorcycle trails throughout the forest – very few exist and they are crowded

Recreation

- Adopt the Great Eastern Trail concept; protect the proposed corridor
- More opportunities for remote recreation
- More areas for trout and other coldwater fisheries
- Need more short, easy loop trails for families
- Improved trail maintenance standards and blazing

Wildlife

- More grouse habitat with small to moderate size clearcuts, not group selection (around 2 acre openings); grouse are declining
- More concern for non-game wildlife
- Retain MA 14 areas with equal or stronger prescriptions – important for black bear and other species in remote settings
- Need more open woodland habitat
- Strictly protect wood turtle populations and protect with a research natural area or special biological area for the best sites

Vegetation

- Establish objectives for old growth in areas other than wilderness
- Do not cut any more old growth since inventory is not adequate to know how much we really have
- More MA 16 (Early Successional Habitat) areas
- More timber harvesting because the forest is aging quicker than cutting and the older stands are dominating the age class distribution; harvest what is planned for - actual harvest is much less than the approved 1993 plan level
- Harvesting is good for the local economy
- Decrease timber sales because it competes with the private landowner
- Timber harvesting leads to improved wildlife habitat; especially when spatially and temporally dispersed
- Remove the suitable timber land from the MA 14 areas within inventoried roadless areas
- Keep suitability for timber harvest on perimeter of areas but not in the interior

- Continue timber harvesting in areas already managed and stay out of unmanaged areas
- Identify additional land with low quality, poor site indices that may need to be harvested for wood chips to go into future fuel in alcohol production
- Don't mix good timber with low grade timber in sale packaging; keep roads at lowest standard needed

Forest Health

- Forest Health is a top priority and requires the use of appropriate tools, such as prescribed fire, timber harvesting and management of invasive species
- Invasive species – need to be aggressive, Forest Service has the chance to be leader in identification and control
- Concern over gypsy moth population explosions and impacts to timber and wildlife habitat
- Forest health doesn't necessarily mean human intervention

Water

- Should have a municipal watershed management area
- Identify acidified streams and soils and establish guidelines and objectives
- Adopt the Jefferson riparian standards, which are stricter than current plan

North River Ranger District

Wilderness and Roadless

- Elliot Knob, Crawford Mtn, Jerkemtight and Skidmore Roadless Areas – consider for wilderness
- Little River Roadless Area - Wilderness designation of core
- Little River and Ramsey's Draft Roadless Areas – make one big wilderness
- Snake Ridge should be roadless area and protected
- Marshall Run/Beech Lick Knob should be roadless area or wilderness
- Protect the MA 15 area between Oak Knob and Little River roadless areas to create a larger block
- The MA 15 area northwest of the upper part of the Shenandoah Crest and Camp Run area is unroaded and should be better protected
- Dry River roadless area – wilderness for WV
- Broad Run area/MA 16 west of Little River roadless area should also be a roadless area

Mountain Biking

- Bicycle route along the western edge of the forest (Lee through North River districts) with cabins (hut to hut)
- Little River Roadless area – keep bicycling access, suggest creating shorter loops by connecting existing trails with new sustainable contour trails
- Ramsey's Draft Roadless Area – existing use in the southern portion
- Slate Lick area – mark more trails
- Increase access to high clearance bike trails in MA 14 north of Rt 33
- Build a mtn bike trail system through MA 14 (south of Elliott Knob roadless area) through Elliott Knob roadless area and through Crawford Mtn roadless area, loop trail opportunities
- National IMBA trail through Jerkemtight roadless area and MA 14 north of Jerkemtight, in Jerkemtight roadless area and lower part of Ramsey's Draft Addition
- Bike use exists in Gum Run, Oak Knob, Skidmore and Little River roadless areas
- Connect Reddish Knob and Bald Knob trail
- Shenandoah Mtn Trail special for mtn biking use

Horseback Riding

- Trail through Jerkemtight Roadless Area is too narrow, conflicts with mtn bike users
- Develop and mark horse trails off Cold Spring Road at Rowland Road, need parking
- Horse trails in MA 15 area northeast of Jerkemtight Roadless Area
- More trails in Shaws Fork area, it's a great campground
- Additional trailhead access in MA 15 near Rock Lick/Reubens Draft area adjacent to Rts 629 and 688

General Access

- Preserve road access on existing FS roads
- Open roads in MA 15 at Braley Pond for school bus access
- Better access to 2nd Mtn from Rt 33 with improved OHV trail networks, keep Rocky Run access road to 2nd Mtn and allow private landowners to gate the current 2nd Mtn access road

4WD Access

- SVA 4WD Association does trail cleanup in the Skidmore area
- Reopen the Rocky Run trail off Rt 33 for OHV use

ATV Access

- No ATVs in the Archer area
- Possible expansion at Archer Run area in the timber production area
- More obstacles for the Rocky Run ATV area

Wind

- No ridgelines are suitable for wind power
- There may be some suitable land for wind, need to look at all the options

Gas Leasing

- No surface occupancy in the Shaws Ridge MA 15 area (west of Ramsey's Draft)

Vegetation Management

- North side of Rt 33 up to Hardy/Rockingham county lines – more timber harvest and herbaceous openings for wildlife management
- More early successional habitat in MA 14 and MA 4 around Switzer Dam
- More timber and vegetation management in the MA 14 and 15 areas near Beech Lick Knob, along State Route 818
- WV side of Shenandoah Mtn next to Skidmore – maintain early successional habitat
- Burn New Road area and western Shenandoah county for regrowth
- Support the use of prescribed burns, increase areas of wildlife habitat and food plots
- More early successional habitat to benefit wildlife, 10-15 percent of total area and stick to the plan
- Increase the age class distribution, create more early successional habitat
- More timber management in the MA 15 and 14 areas on the north side of Rt 33 on the suitable timber land
- More timber management in the MA 15 area west of Dry River roadless area and south of Brandywine recreation area
- Limit timber harvesting the MA 13 area east of Ramseys Draft to provide a corridor between contiguous areas

- The MA 14 areas between Benson Run and Signal Knob Corps are remote habitats and should be unsuitable for timber
- Large (10-25 acre) cuts for grouse habitat needed in Little River roadless area, MA 15 and MA 13 around Todd Lake and MA 15 around Braley Pond

Recreation

- Keep Signal Knob as is
- Continue to rehab Elliott Knob fire tower; keep all communication devices in designated area; put a Civil War trails sign up at the tower (upcoming 150th anniversary)

Wildlife

- Re-establish elk population in the Shenandoah Crest Zone
- More stringent protection for the Cow Knob Salamander in Shenandoah Crest area; remove OHV roads in the area; expand the area with new research on the Cow Knob salamander range
- More grouse habitat needed, especially in Churchville area

Water

- Watershed protection especially for the Elliott Knob and Little River roadless areas
- Skidmore area is Harrisonburg's municipal watershed and should be protected

Lee Ranger District

Wilderness and Roadless

- Big Schloss roadless area – wilderness study area or national scenic area, change MA 15 area between MA 9 and Big Schloss to MA 9 and make it all one large wilderness; once the largest intact, unfragmented roadless area in the east until management has fragmented it, could reconnect and restore
- There are additional areas around Big Schloss that qualify for roadless but are not inventoried roadless areas
- Would like to see a wilderness for this district, from a mosaic perspective from Ramsey's Draft wilderness
- Southern Massanutten Mountain roadless area – make it a national scenic area
- Three High Heads and upper drainage of Little Stony Creek areas – wilderness
- Expand wilderness around Wolf Gap (southern end of Big Schloss)

Mountain Biking

- Southern end of Northern Massanutten Roadless Area has mtn biking use (Stephens Trail and Kennedy Peak area)
- Big Schloss Roadless Area part of large network of trails (all the way up to Route 55 and then down to Basore), could keep mtn biking use if Big Schloss is a national scenic area

Horseback Riding

- Old Dominion Horse Association has several events (including 100 mile) through Big Schloss roadless area

General Access

- Need better access to FS lands in Frederick County, no place to park at intersections of Rts 93 and 371, and at Rts 502 and 55.
- Open roads for hunting in MA 17 near State Route 612 and 1699A

4WD Access

- OHV trails don't have to be high maintenance and can have rocks, mud and ruts
- There is no OHV/ATV access on the western part of the district

ATV Access

- Eliminate Taskers Gap/Peters Mill Run ATV area south of Route 675 crossing (noise and safety)
- Make a connector trail between Taskers Gap and Edinburg Gap so ATVs will stay off of the paved Edinburg Gap Road.
- Close off Taskers Gap/Peters Mill Run ATV area to let it recuperate for a while. Can we rotate use with another area while recuperating?

- Add more ATV/OHV trails in the Taskers Gap/Peters Mill Run area to disperse use

Recreation

- Premier existing hang gliding and paragliding use on Massanutten Mtn
- Need more sanitation facilities along the more heavily used dispersed areas next to the Shenandoah River
- Link trails to the new Seven Bends state park that is adjacent to FS (near Woodstock?)
- Dispersed recreation problem - camping occurring too close to the stream along Little Stony Creek so neighbors are cleaning up
- Add the 'ad hoc' Strickler Knob Trail to trail inventory
- Need an area that has water-based recreation/lake, like Lewis Knob on the Daniel Boone NF
- More scenic viewing opportunities
- Blind hiker with dog uses trail near Hawk Campground, high branch maintenance is critical
- Need a public shooting range

Vegetation

- More timber harvesting and management needed, more early successional habitat
- Lot of white pine beetle infestation in MA 9 area near Tomahawk Pond, along the Rockingham and Hardy county lines
- Need habitat diversity in Big Schloss and Southern Massanutten roadless areas, allow even-aged cutting along the perimeter for early successional habitat, i.e. grouse habitat
- More selective cutting in MA 17, less clearcutting
- Lot of invasive species at the north end of the Lee District

Wildlife

- Good bald and golden eagle habitat in the MA 15 area around Lost River/Kimsey Run
- Continue to manage for bear habitat in MA 14 on Southern Massanutten Mtn southeast of New Market
- Change the MA 14 that adjoins MA 9 near Tomahawk Pond at the Rockingham and Hardy county line to continue the MA 9 up along the ridgeline – why does it stop at the county line?
- Several good locations for wood turtle habitat

Grazing

- Keep cattle out of streams and rivers near the Shenandoah River – provide alternate water sources or inexpensive electric fencing, opportunities now exist for financial assistance from various agencies to riparian protection

Water

- Little Stony below Woodstock Reservoir – consider agreement with Woodstock to have water released from below versus over dam at a rate commensurate with inflow – this will allow lower water temps for area below the dam and improve fish (native brook trout) habitat
- Passage Creek throughout the heart of Fort Valley is vital and should be protected, FS should be involved with community efforts to preserve water quality
- Spring water along Edinburg Gap Road is used by many local people.
- Reintroduction of native brook trout in Upper Passage Creek

James River Ranger District

Wilderness and Roadless

- MA 17 on south end of district, Peters Mtn between Rts 600 and 650 – wilderness protection due to old growth and special biological area
- Dolly Ann roadless area – wilderness
- Oliver Mtn roadless area - wilderness

Mountain Biking

- Dolly Ann roadless area has existing mountain bike use

General Access

- Maintain access to Jingling Rocks; access has been approved across private land

4WD Access

- Maintain OHV access on Hughes Draft unmaintained access road

ATV Access

- Need ATV trails on the district

Recreation

- Oliver Mtn roadless area could provide recreation trail opportunities to meet demand from Lake Moomaw visitors

Vegetation Management

- Salvage gypsy moth damage on the southern end of the district

Warm Springs Ranger District

Wilderness and Roadless

- Protect the area between Rough Mtn and Rich Hole Wildernesses where it is now MA 14 to create larger block of wilderness-like area
- Laurel Fork – designate wilderness, no wilderness since it serves many recreation uses, crown jewel of biodiversity, trout streams, leave it managed as it is now
- Little Alleghany roadless area – wilderness, habitat for high elevation migrant bird species, possibly add MA 15 to the east across Rt 601 and MA 14 on the north and it could be one larger area
- Rough Mtn addition should be wilderness
- Beards Mtn roadless area – national scenic area, existing mountain bike use
- Mill Mtn roadless area and MA 14 area between Rough Mtn and Rich Hole Wildernesses – this could be a large block of connected wilderness; need to hunt, harvest timber and do game management in the MA 14 area

Mountain Biking

- Extensive use north and south of Douthat State Park, Adventure Race MTB Triathlons race route

General Access

- MA 15 area around Hidden Valley and Blowing Springs Campgrounds – leave roads open January through February

4WD Access

- Maintain OHV use on Rts 630 and 129 near Rough Mtn Wilderness
- Strive for OHV use in areas of forest already broken up and keep out of large blocks of unbroken forest
- Extend open road season beyond hunting seasons to avoid OHV use interfering with hunting activities
- Use volunteer 4WD organizations to help with minimal maintenance needs
- OHV in Shoe Creek area

Gas Leasing

- Limit surface occupancy on all the land north of Route 84

Recreation

- Finish Highlands Trail system loops around Douthat State Park – shared use, consider area for National Recreation Area
- Hidden Valley Campground area – remove the suitability for timber harvest that is south and east of the area; expand protection around the area; Jackson River watershed
- Blowing Springs Campground area – increase protection around it

Vegetation Management

- Clearcuts along Route 125 (west of Douthat State Park) for grouse habitat and along Rt 624 above Bath Alum and in the MA 15 area above Hidden Valley Campground
- MA 14 area north of Route 84 (Big Ridge) – continue timber management and early successional habitat for ecological restoration because oak is not coming back

Pedlar Ranger District

Wilderness and Roadless

- High protection in Kelley Mtn Roadless Area/Big Levels area, make it a national scenic area; maintain the special biological areas; scenic viewshed along Coal Road
- Three Sisters Roadless area – make a wilderness; make a national scenic area; keep it remote backcountry as it is now; keep open to mtn bikes
- St Mary's Addition – make wilderness
- Add the small block of MA 16 west of St Mary's Wilderness and the MA 4 portion of Kelley Mtn Roadless area on the north side of St Mary's Wilderness to the wilderness system

Mountain Biking

- Keep bicycling access in Kelley Mtn Roadless area, suggest parallel trail to Coal Road; suggest shorter loop opportunities by connecting existing trails with new trails (ex. Mill Creek and Torry Jeep Trail to the reservoir)
- Whetstone Ridge Trail in Adams Peak Roadless area is very popular mtn bike trail and is maintained by Charlottesville Area Mtn Bike Club; part of Adventure Races; could turn into a loop trail
- Mtn bike use in MA 13 area southwest of Sherando Lake; opportunity for beginners/kid friendly trails there?
- Connect trails from Salt Log Gap over to Montebello Fish Hatchery
- Connect trail from Road 495 to Route 757 in MA 9 (Coates Mtn/Whites Peak) to Rt 76 for a loop trail opportunity
- Build single track trails in MA 15 near Oronoco
- Use in MA 13 south of Sherando

Horseback Riding

- Jordan Road – need horse loop and trailhead

General Access

- Better access at Petit's Gap and stream crossing improvement just before trail crosses Petit's Gap

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4WD Access

- Expand South Pedlar ATV area to include OHV use
- Kelley Mtn Roadless Area has some OHV ridgetops trails with a dead end. Could create closed loop
- FSR 162 in Kelley Mtn Roadless area is important road for 4WD use
- Existing use in MA 13 near Road 263 (Nelson/Amherst county line)
- Can South Pedlar ATV area be accommodating to OHV use?
- Need 4WD trails in Campbell/Bedford/Amherst county area

Recreation

- Continue the lease to the Nature Camp along Road 104 – great educational opportunity
- The main trail along St Mary's need to be relocated both for hiker safety and stream erosion issues

Water

- Lynchburg Reservoir is important municipal watershed, no timber harvesting or use longer rotations

Vegetation

- The Pedlar district is located in an active industrial forestry area, timber harvesting important for local economy
- Need more early successional habitat on the district